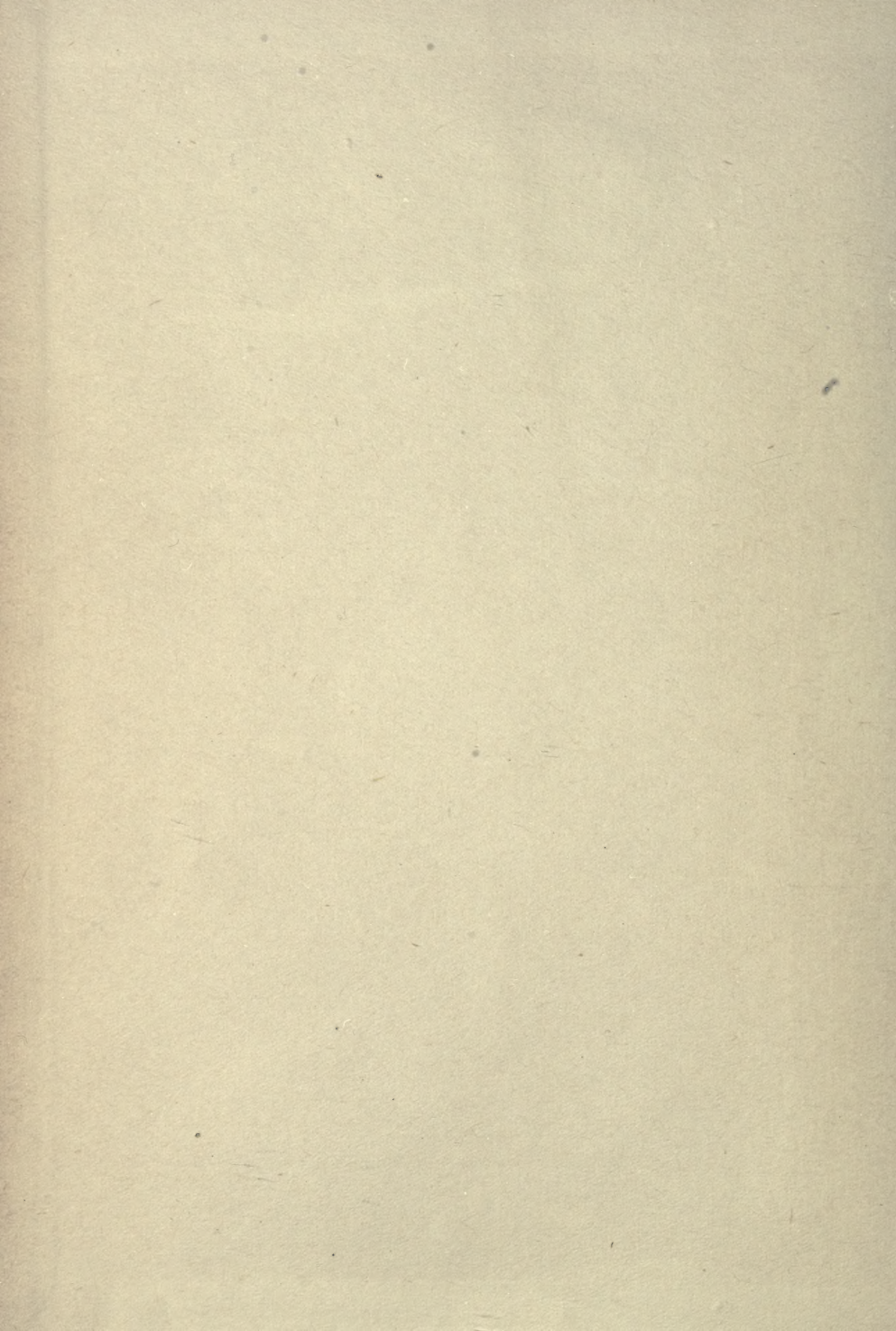


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HAMID THE LUCKLESS
AND OTHER TALES IN VERSE.

MR. PAYNE'S WORKS.

POEMS.

1. The Masque of Shadows and other Poems. . . 1870.
2. Intaglios: Sonnets 1871.
3. Songs of Life and Death 1872.
4. L'autrec: a Poem. 1878.
5. New Poems. 1880.
(N.B. The above are out of print; but their contents are included in N^o. 6).
6. Collected Poems (1862—1902). 2 Vols. . . . 1902.
7. Vigil and Vision. New Sonnets. 1903.
8. Songs of Consolation. New Lyrics 1904.
9. Hamid the Luckless and other Tales in Verse. 1904.
10. Poems of Youth. (1862—1867). In the Press.
11. Dream-Voices. New Poems. (In preparation).

TRANSLATIONS.

1. The Poems of François Villon 1878.
2. The Book of the Thousand Nights and one Night. Nine Vols. 1882—4.
3. Tales from the Arabic. Three Vols. 1884.
4. Alaeddin and Zein ul Asnam 1885.
5. The Decameron of Boccaccio. Three Vols. . . 1886.
6. The Novels of Matteo Bandello. Six Vols. . . 1890.
7. The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam. 1898.
8. The Poems of Hafiz. Three Vols. 1901.
9. A Gallic Garland; Metrical Translations from the French, old and new. (In preparation).

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HAMID THE LUCKLESS AND
OTHER TALES IN VERSE. BY
JOHN PAYNE.

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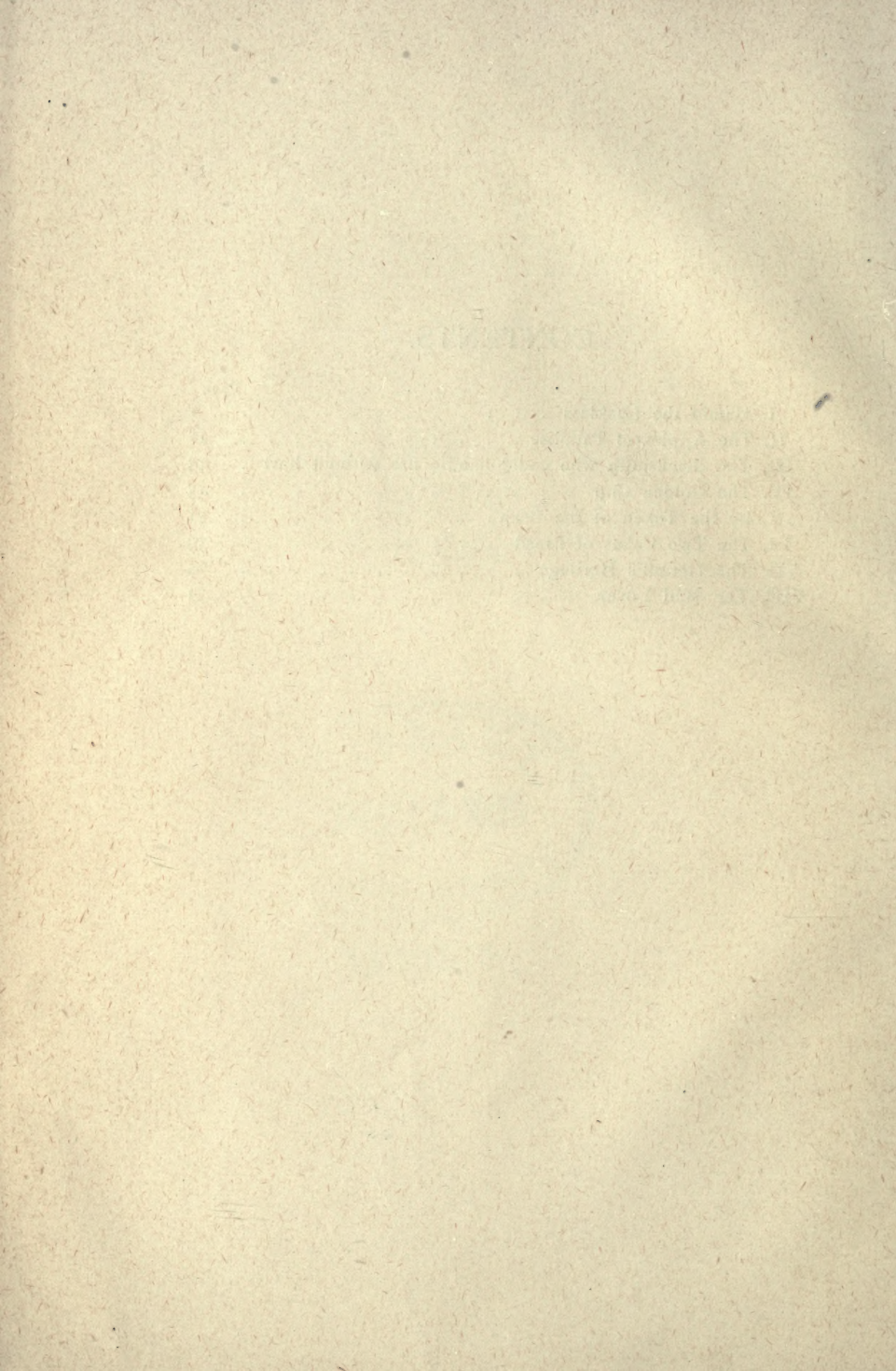
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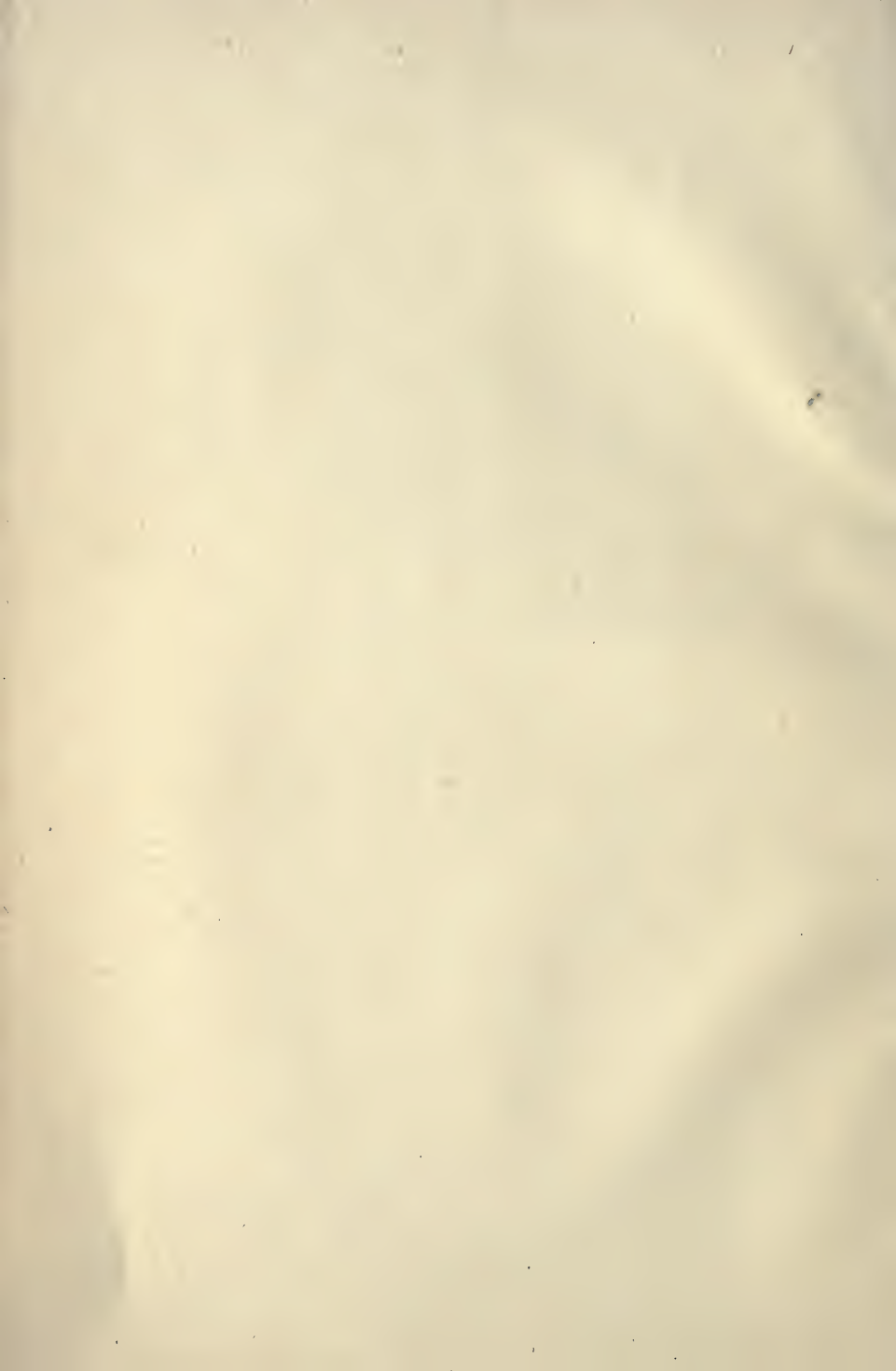
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*JAAFER, whose memory, 'mid the sea of slaughters
Of Orient story, 'gainst the bloodstained sky
Upstanding stainless, as a lily high
And radiant, rises from the turbid waters
Of times with evil filled and evil-fautors, —
Thou, to be numbered with their names, that die
Not ever, but the tooth of Time defy,
Most worth that art of Syria's sons and daughters, —
Memorial, these of right to thee belong;
Thy name upon their front for greater grace
I grave, that didst nor saidest aught of base,
Thine, whose fair life a thousand years erewhen
Failed at the tyrant's mandate, yet in song
Undying dures and in the minds of men.*



HAMID THE LUCKLESS.



HAMID THE LUCKLESS.

ONCE, in a city of Mazenderán,
There lived and throve a passing wealthy man,
Whose lands and houses, chattels and array,
One scarce might tell in half a summer's day.
One child he had, a son of tender age,
Hamid by name; and when upon Life's page
The term its stern sign-manual had scored
For him, unto the mercy of his Lord
Departing, in the prime of manlihood,
He to his heir left all his gear and good.
The youth, thus orphaned of a father's care,
Betook himself to spending without spare,
Feasting and banqueting both night and day
And hearkening to song and ghittern-play,
Whilst over him the golden-sandalled hours
Fled ever fleetlier, wreathed with floating flowers
And measured by the feet of dancing girls;
For nothing upon earth past ebon curls
And ruby lips and breasts of living snow,
Past flashing teeth, like camomiles arow,
And lamping eyes, with love and wine agleam,
He prized; nor yet in heaven, him did seem,
Was any greater good or more divine
Than, to the pulse of pipe and viol, wine
To quaff and toy with lovelings at his ease,
Beneath the blossoming pomegranate-trees.
Nor did he leave to lavish on this wise,
Till all the gold and good and merchandise,

Which from his father he had heired, were spent
 And nought but emptiness, for all content,
 Abode in chest and coffer, hall and store.
 Yet not withal his wastry he gave o'er,
 But sold his slaves, his houses and his lands
 And whatsoever else unto his hands
 Had come, and cast the price to every wind,
 As if in haste him quit thereof to find.
 So, in short season, all he did possess
 He spent in chambering and wantonness
 And being thus reduced to beggary,
 With his sad body, for a penny fee,
 In heat and cold, in rain and sun and dust,
 For all who chose to hire him labour must.

On this wise for a year long shift he made
 To live, until, as Fate and Fortune bade,
 One day, what while beneath a wall, await
 For who should hire him for a wage, he sate,
 There came to him a man of reverend
 And comely mien and vesture, who with "Friend,
 "Peace be on thee!" accosted him. Whereto,
 His greeting rendered him with answer due,
 "O uncle, hast thou known me," asked the youth,
 "In days bygone?" And he, "Not so; forsooth,
 "I know thee not at all, my son," replied;
 "But in thine aspect, not to be denied,
 "Despite thy present plight, the trace I see
 "Of gentle breeding." "O my lord," quoth he,
 "Needs must the canon of fore-ordered Fate
 "Accomplished be, and thereanent debate
 "Nought skilleth. But, o uncle, bright of face,
 "Need or occasion hast thou aught, percase,
 "Wherein thou wouldst employ me?" "Ay have I,
 "And in a matter eath to satisfy,"

The old man answered him. "What may that be?"
 Asked Hamid; and the stranger, "Know, with me
 "Ten elders in one house I have who dwell;
 "But we have none to serve us, ill or well.
 "Wherefore, if thou wilt service with us take,
 "Thou shalt have store, for thy good tendance sake,
 "Of food and wede and wage thy heart's content,
 "And it may be that God omnipotent
 "Thy fortune at our hands shall thee restore."
 "With all my heart," quoth Hamid. "One word more,"
 The old man said; "by token I on thee
 "Have a condition to impose." Quoth he,
 "And what is that?" "It is," the sire replied,
 "That, o my son, at every time and tide,
 "Of what thou seest us do thou straitly keep
 "Our secret and that, when thou seest us weep
 "And groan and beat our breasts and brows and sigh
 "And wail, thou question us on no wise why
 "Nor of the cause enquire of our lament."
 "'Tis well, my lord; withal I am content,"
 The young man made him answer. Whereanent
 The other bade him, "Come, my son, with me
 "And God Most High His blessing be with thee!"
 And Hamid, in his steps, accordingly,
 Unto the bath ensuing, was made free
 From all the grime of poortith and a new
 Fair linen garment after must indue,
 Which for his use the stranger sire let bring.
 Thereafterward, his new lord following,
 Him to a spacious dwellinghouse he brought,
 High builded, all with roofs of cedar wrought
 And ceiled with gold and lapis-lazuli,
 In figures carven wonder-sweet to see,
 And walled with alabaster, graven and gilt;

Wherein were sitting-chambers fairly built,
 Each unto each opposéd, and saloons,
 With fountains fresh, that through the heavy noons
 Cool music made, and birds that still the praise
 Piped of the Maker of the nights and days.
 Nor, in the midward of the place, for shade,
 Fair gardens did there fail, with colonnade
 On colonnade of palms and orange-trees,
 In whose lush leafy tops the balmy breeze
 Unto the chirp of fountains made refrain,
 That in the stillness rose and fell again.
 There wood-doves warbled in the mossy dells
 And nightingales made moan and wild gazelles
 Drank of the runnels whispering through the green.
 There was no sound in all that deep serene,
 Save the soft plaint of cushats nesting there,
 With the low harpings of the scented air
 Accordant, from Elburz the abode to cool
 That came, and splash of waters in the pool;
 But there sweet scents and colours wrought a charm,
 The pleasance of the place to hold from harm
 And churlish clamour of the world without.
 Moreover, all the garden round about,
 Arcades of cedar, gold and ivory wrought,
 There ran, that to the house its pleasance brought,
 Filling each nook and corner of the place
 With scent and coolth and song for greater grace.
 Thence to a sitting-chamber, sweet to see,
 Paved all with jasper and chalcedony
 And lined with marbles rare of many a hue,
 Whereof the ceiling aped the sheer sky's blue,
 With golden starlets fretted all around,
 The old man Hamid brought; and there he found
 Other ten elders, clad in mourning weeds,

On silken carpets, flowered like the meads
 In middle summer, seated face to face,
 Five against five, anent their sorry case
 That wept and wailed and them bemoaned and beat
 Their breasts and on the marble at their feet
 Bowed down their brows, as do the sorrowing.

Sore wondered was the young man at the thing
 And was in act to ask the cause of it,
 When the condition he recalled, to wit,
 That he of aught he saw should not enquire,
 And held his peace. Then he that did him hire
 A heavy coffer thither brought and laid
 Open to him with gold galore and said,
 "Take, o my son, this coffer, which in hold
 "Hath thirty thousand dinars of right gold,
 "And for our entertainment and thine own
 "Expend thereof, as to the occasion grown
 "Shall e'en befit: and look thou faithful be
 "Nor that forget concerning secrecy
 "Whereof I charged thee". "On my head and eyes",
 The young man answered; "be it on this wise".
 Then he took up the coffer and as best
 He knew himself to serve the folk address,
 Ordering their state and household as was due
 And dealing faithfully with them and true.

So he abode and served them days and nights
 And months and years, till one of the ten wights,
 Of those, to wit, themselves that mortified
 With weeping and lament, fell sick and died;
 Whereat his fellows rose to him and laid
 Him out and washed and shrouded him and prayed
 O'er him and in a hortyard, that behind
 The mansion was, him to the earth consigned.
 Nor did death leave to take them, one by one,

Till of them all remained no mother's son,
 Save only him who did the young man hire.

Thereafter Hamid with that reverend sire
 Year after year abode; nor, far and nigh,
 Was there a third with them save God Most High;
 But there alone they dwelt, until, at last,
 Whenas twelve full-told years were come and past,
 The elder sickened even unto death;
 And when himself he felt to his last breath
 Draw nigh, he called the youth to him and said,
 "Know, o my son, my comrades all are dead
 "And to His mercy have returned again
 "To whom both might and majesty pertain:
 "And now I also in my turn must die."
 Thereat the salt tears sprang in Hamid's eye;
 But, mastering himself, with broken speech
 And words, uneath that followed each on each,
 "O uncle," said he, "these twelve years and more
 "Have I thy household ordered and thy store;
 "Nor have I failed a moment of my faith,
 "But with my whole endeavour harm and scaith
 "Still have I fended off from yours and you:
 "And now, in recompence for service due,
 "Fain would I have thee tell me, ere thou die,
 "The reason of thy discontent and why
 "Thou and thy comrades dead your lives did spend
 "In tears and lamentation without end."

"My son," the old man answered, "sooth to tell,
 "Thou hast our counsel kept and served us well;
 "But this whereof thou ask'st concerns thee not:
 "So prithee importune me not of what
 "I may not do; for I to God most High
 "Have vowed that unto none alive would I
 "Discover this our case, lest there befall

"Him what befell me and my comrades all;
 "Yet, if," continued he, "thou have a mind,
 "Reason and prudence casting to the wind,
 "To know the secret of our misery
 "And suffer that which we have suffered, we,
 "Open the door, which in yon nook doth stand,"
 And pointed thither with his trembling hand,
 "And thou the cause of that shalt come to wit
 "Thou sawst us do; but, when thou knowest it,
 "Thou wilt repent of that which thou hast wrought,
 "Whenas repentance shall avail thee nought.
 "So, if thou wilt be ruled by me, give o'er
 "The emprise thou wilt and open not the door."
 Then was his sickness passing sore on him
 And waxed and worsened, till his eyes grew dim;
 And so, his term being come to its extent,
 Unto the presence of his Lord he went.
 And Hamid washed and shrouded him and made
 A grave behind the house and therein laid
 The dead to rest beside his comrades ten,
 Sore for him mourning and lamenting; then,
 In that great mansion he abode alone
 And all that was therein had for his own.

Now, of a truth, content should Hamid be,
 For that in plenty and felicity
 He sate and had in mast'ry wealth and store,
 Past that which he had squandered theretofore.
 Yet was he troubled and uneasy still,
 The old man's case concerning, and until
 He had his wish thereof, for wandesire,
 The curious thought burned in him like a fire;
 And still (and most anights upon his bed)
 He pondered that which his dead lord had said
 And how he had enjoined him from the door

Forbear; and wish waxed in him more and more
 To prove his fortune, hap thereof what might.
 At last, as he sat pondering one night,
 Himself to seek the door out he bethought
 And note at least its fashion. So he sought
 Where the dead man had signed and in a nook,
 Where none for dark and dust was like to look,
 A postern-door he found, deep set in stone,
 Barred with four locks of steel and thick o'ergrown
 With spiders' webs; but, calling to his mind
 The old man's rede and fearful eke to find
 Some gruesome thing, himself withal restrained
 And went away. Moreover, he refrained
 Some seven days' space therefrom and still apart
 Held from the door, which all the while his heart
 Would have him open and his reason not.

At last, desire the better of him got,
 On the eighth day, and "Come what will," said he,
 "Needs must I open yonder door and see
 "What shall betide me. Nothing can awry
 "That which foreordered is of God Most High,
 "Neither can anything, for good or ill,
 "Accomplished be, excepting of His will."
 So saying, he arose nor faltered more,
 But broke the locks, and opening the door,
 In a strait passage found himself, that wound
 Afar into the distance underground;
 Nor anywise affeared was, but the way
 In darkness followed, unillumed by ray
 Of sun or stars, till, after three hours' space,
 At last it brought him to an open place,
 Whereby, ascending to the daylight, he
 Came out upon the shores of a vast sea,
 That spread out far and wide beyond eye-reach.

Then he fared on awhile along the beach,
 Unknowing where, in wonder ever new
 At that great water, nought whereof he knew,
 And turning evermore from side to side,
 Though nought but sky and ocean still he spied,
 Till on him, of a sudden, from on high,
 There swooped a mighty eagle, that well nigh
 Great as a castle was, and with its claws
 Seizing him, as a lion in its paws
 Bears off a lamb, soared up into the blue
 And betwixt earth and heaven with him flew,
 Till, to an island coming in mid-sea,
 Where nought but air and water was to see,
 Thereon it cast him down and went its way,
 Leaving him dazed nor knowing what to say
 Or do. However, in a little space,
 As he sat pondering his sorry case,
 Well nigh for woe distracted and amaze,
 Chancing upon the sea to cast his gaze,
 A vessel in mid-ocean he espied,
 As 'twere a single star in heaven wide,
 And his heart clave to it, so happily
 Deliverance therein for him should be.
 Nor did he leave to follow with his eye
 The coming ship till it at last drew nigh;
 When that it was a galley, builded high
 Of ebony and ivory, inlaid
 With glittering gold, he saw, with masts arrayed
 Of sandal wood and aloes, ropes of silk
 And sails of taffetas as white as milk.
 Therefrom, as in due season to the shore
 It came, there landed damsels half-a-score,
 High-bosomed maids, as moons to look upon,
 That in midsummer heav'ns unclouded shone;

Who, when they saw him, straight toward him made
 And kissed his hands and him fair welcome bade,
 Saying, "Thou art the bridegroom and the king!
 "Our homage all unto thy feet we bring."
 Then unto him there came another maid,
 As she the sun were, shining without shade,
 Bearing a silken cloth, a crown in which
 Of gold there was, with pearls and rubies rich,
 And eke a royal robe of precious stuff,
 No king on earth there is but rich enough
 It for his raiment were. The robe she let
 Over him fall and on his head she set
 The crown; wherewith the other half-a-score,
 Taking him up, unto the galley bore
 And on a couch in the mid-poop him laid,
 Spread all with silken carpets and arrayed
 With tapestry of gules and gold and blue
 And many another bright and goodly hue.
 This done, they spread the silken sails again
 And launched forthright into the middle main,
 As 'twere a dove, that oared with silver wings
 The sky; whilst Hamid, pondering these things,
 Him seemed that in a maze of dreams he went;
 Nor aught he knew, for sheer astonishment,
 Of what they did with him or whitherward
 They carried him that goodly bark aboard.

Meanwhile, the galley ceased not from its flight
 Across the blue, until they came in sight
 Of a fair land, with green and golden shores,
 Jasmine and musk outbreathing from its stores
 Of midwood sweets; and as unto the strand
 Swiftly they drew, he saw the silver sand
 With horsemen and with footmen filled, in mail
 Of steel complete arrayed, whereof the tale

There's none save God (exalted be His name
 And blest!) can tell. And when the galley came
 Overagainst the landing-place and fast
 Made thereunto, there was a gangway cast
 Of sandalwood from it unto the shore;
 Whereoverward the damsels Hamid bore
 And set him reverently upon the land.
 Then came there grooms with horses five in hand,
 Past all conceiving gracious to behold,
 Highbred and housed and saddled all with gold,
 With pearls and precious stones of every kind
 Inlaid, and prayed him that which to his mind
 Was most to mount. Whereat he chose out one,
 Such as no king possesseth 'neath the sun,
 And it bestrode, whilst they the others led
 Before him. Therewithal, above his head
 The banners and the standards hoisted they,
 Whilst all the troops in orderly array
 Ranged themselves right and left, and forth they set,
 With drums and cymbals sounding without let
 And trumpets thundering a point of war,
 And rode with Hamid inland evermore,
 What while he knew not if on wake or sleep
 He was, but through the mazes dim and deep
 Of tangling dreams as one that fares did go,
 Misdoubting if the thing were true or no;
 Till to a green champaign anigh they drew,
 Of palaces fulfilled, in leafage new
 Embow'red and gardens brimmed with blooming trees
 And flowering shrubs and blossoms, where the breeze
 With sound and scent made carol to the birds,
 That with their dulcet pipes, than mortal words
 More meet, the praises sang of God the One,
 Victorious, Orderer of Moon and Sun:

And these beyond, a city wonder-white
 There was, that lifted up to heaven's height
 Its domes and pinnacles of blue and gold.

As they drew near, from every forest-fold
 And garden-gate, there poured an army out,
 As 'twere a freshet, when the Spring to rout
 The Winter puts and from the labouring hills
 The snow sun-melted pours and all the rills,
 Foreflushed and flooded of the vernal rains,
 To torrents swells, — and overflowed the plains.
 A space apart from Hamid halted they
 And from the middleward of their array,
 A crownéd king rode forth, with stately tread,
 By officers afoot foreheralded,
 Who, drawing near, to honour him, alit
 Down from his horse; and Hamid, seeing it,
 Dismounted too and hastened him to meet;
 Wherewith the twain the other each did greet
 On goodly wise. Then, "O my lord, come now
 "With us", began the stranger king; "for thou
 "My guest art". So they both took horse again
 And in great state fared on across the plain,
 Discoursing, as they went, without abate,
 Of matters of the Faith and things of weight
 And gravity, until the city-port
 They reached and passing through with their escort,
 Came to a lordly palace, builded high
 With pinnacles upmounting to the sky.

Alighting here, into a vasty hall,
 With aisles of fretted cedar rounded all
 And deep-groined roofs, wherein the sweet sky's hue
 Coerulean shone the golden tracery through,
 Hamid they brought and on a royal throne
 Of right red gold, with many a cushion strown

Of cramoizin and purple, high and wide,
 Enforced him, wondering, sit; whilst by his side
 His host the king on like wise took his place.
 Then he undid the chin-band from his face,
 And lo! the king a lady young and fair
 Was as the sunshine in the April air,
 Perfect in amorous grace and languishment;
 There is no man beneath the firmament
 Might look upon her beauty but in twain
 His heart were rent for love and longing pain.
 And unto Hamid, speechless for amaze
 At all the wealth and wonder, that his gaze
 Met wheresoe'er he turned it, and no less
 At that high lady's grace and loveliness
 Than at the affluence and fertility
 Of that fair land, "Know, o my lord," quoth she,
 "That I of all this country am the queen,
 "And all the troops and armies thou hast seen,
 "Both horse and foot, are women like to me.
 "For men in this our land for menials be,
 "Peasants and husbandmen, who till the soil
 "And hew and delve and sow and reap and toil
 "And in the like mechanic crafts and arts
 "Themselves employ and traffic in the marts;
 "Whilst women fill the offices of state
 "And reign and rule the realm and wear the weight
 "Of arms and use the chase with horse and hound."

At this discourse he marvelled without bound;
 And as they were in talk of this and that,
 There came up to the dais where they sat
 A tall old woman of majestic air
 And venerable mien, with ash-gray hair,
 That o'er her shoulders fell, in many a tress.
 This, it was told him, was the Vizieress,

Whom the queen, seeing her, commanded bring
 Cadi and witnesses; and she this thing
 Went forth to do; what while the queen, again
 Turning to Hamid with soft speech, was fain
 With him on friendly fashion to converse,
 And strove with lovesome dealing to disperse
 His shamefastness and set him at his ease
 And blandishments more dulcet than the breeze
 That in the Spring the roses' royal scent
 Far and wide beareth. Then, "Art thou content,"
 Quoth she, "to wife to take me?" Whereanent
 Forthright he rose and fain the earth would kiss
 Before her feet; but she forbade him this;
 And "O my lady, on my head and eye,
 "The least," he answered, "of thy slaves am I:"
 Then, "Seest thou these servants all," she said,
 "And troops and wealth and treasure here arrayed?"
 "Ay," answered he; and she thereto, "These all
 "Are," said, "at thy commandment and thy call.
 "Dispose thereof and give them and bestow,
 "As to thee fitting seemeth, ay or no.
 "Nay," and she pointed to a closed-up door,
 "All things are at thy mercy, all my store,
 "Save but yon door, the which, if thou have wit,
 "Thou wilt forbear; for, if thou open it,
 "Thereof thou wilt repent thee, without fail,
 "Whenas repentance nothing shall avail."
 Scarce had she spoken, when the Vizieress
 Entered, the Cadi and the witnesses
 Ensuing in her footsteps, women all
 Of old and reverend aspect, grave and tall,
 Their shoulders mantled with their tresses gray;
 Whereat the queen commanded them straightway
 The marriage-contract draw herself between

And Hamid. So the stranger to the queen
 They wedded and she made a marriage-feast,
 Whereunto, from the greatest to the least,
 The troops she bade; and when they one and all
 Eaten and drunken had in the great hall,
 In to his bride he went and a clean maid
 Found her and faultless. Then, as Fate-foresaid
 To them it was, together he and she
 Seven years abode in all felicity
 And all content of life, until, one night,
 When warm with wine he was, of Fate's despite,
 The thought of the forbidden door there sped
 Across his mind and in himself he said,
 "Excepting treasures therewithin there were,
 "Richer and more than any to my share
 "That yet have fallen, she had certes not
 "Forbidden me therefrom." Now wine had got
 The mast'ry of his wit and idle thought
 Prompted him do a thing he knew for naught;
 So, being overcome of vain desire,
 (No evil is there greater and more dire,
 Alack! than idle curiosity.)
 He rose and setting hand unto the key,
 Opened the door, but therewithin found nought
 Save that same monstrous fowl, which him had brought
 Unto the island in the middle main
 And when it looked upon the man again,
 Out on him cried with "An ill welcome be
 Unto a face shall never more know glee!"
 When this he saw and heard, he turned and fled;
 But the bird followed him and by the head
 Seizing him in its claws, 'twixt earth and sky
 An hour's space flew; then, stooping from on high,
 Him whence it erst had borne him it set down

And flew away and left him there aswowne.
 Thereafterward insensible he lay
 Until the slow hours brought again the day
 And the hot sun, upon him blazing, broke
 His trance of lifelessness, and he awoke.
 And when unto his sense he came again
 And thought and grief returned into his brain,
 His case he called to mind and of his late
 Content and great and glorious estate
 Bethinking him and all the fortune fair
 And honour he had lost without repair
 By his vaindealing irretrievable,
 To weeping and to wailing sore he fell.
 Then planks and beams, cast up upon the beach
 Of the sea-wrack, he sought and each to each
 Joining, a sorry cabin, which a hound
 Had scarce sufficing for his shelter found,
 Made shift thereof to fashion for his need,
 And carpeting the floor with store of weed,
 By way of couch, therein two months abode,
 Repentance reaping, folly where he sowed,
 And feeding on the shellfish by the sea
 Upcast and of the rainpools drinking, (he
 That late in such delight had lived and cheer!)
 Hoping the eagle yet should reappear
 And bear him back unto his wife and land.
 But nought he saw save sky and sea and strand
 And nothing heard save wail of winds and breach
 Of waves and breakers plashing on the beach.
 Till, as, one night, upon his bed he sate,
 Mourning and pondering his sorry state,
 He heard a voice, that murmured in his ear,
 Although no mortal man, indeed, was near,
 And said, "How great were the delights! Far, far

“Be it from thee that these, bygone which are,
“Should evermore return!” And with this word
It spoke no more. But he, when this he heard,
In his regrets redoubled, neither dared
Hope any longer cherish, but despaired
Of ever more his wife recovering
And his late fair estate of crownéd king.
So, seeking out the passage underground,
He sadly to his house returned and found
All yet untouched, as if seven hours it were,
Not years, agone since he had left it there.
And he bethought him of the ancient men
And how his hirer and his comrades ten
Had all their lives in weeping and lament,
In the sheer midst of ease and plenty, spent
And each with each had nought but sorrow shared,
And knew that surely they as he had fared;
Wherefore excused he held them of their sin.
Then, being overcome with vain chagrin
And profitless regrets and wandesire,
That in his vitals kept a quenchless fire,
Himself unto his chamber he betook
And gave himself to mourning and forsook
Sweet scents and sounds and laughter, meat and wine,
And never more left sorrow and repine
Nor ceased from tears and torment, till he died
And him they buried the old men beside.



THE APPLES OF PARADISE.



THE APPLES OF PARADISE.

TO Him who cleaves the darkness with the light,
Who veils and covers with the thick black night
The dim cold cheek of faint and fading day,
The glory and the worship be alway!
I, Aboubekr, hight El Anberi,
(For that 'twas Anber town gave birth to me,)
God's servant and His Law's expositor,
For my occasions journeying heretofore
Unto Amorium in the land of Roum,
For visitation of a hermit's tomb,
At Enwar village lighted down midway.
Hard by there stood (and standeth yet to day
Belike,) whereas upon the hilltop leans
The heaven, a monastery of Nazarenes,
With battlements and turrets builded high
And spires that held the cross up to the sky.
The prior of the monks, Abdulmesih
By name, (the which, interpreted, is he
Who serves the Christ,) from those who dwelt about
Learning my coming, unto me came out
And brought me in unto the monastery.
There forty monks I found, who harboured me
With passing hospitality that night;
And never, since I looked upon the light,
(Albeit far and wide I've fared and much
And marvellous have seen,) beheld I such
Abounding piety and diligence
Devout in prayer and praise and penitence

As in these Nazaritish monks I saw.
 Then, on the morrow, ere the day did daw,
 I took my leave of them and faring on
 Unto Amorium, thence, my business done,
 Returned to Anber by another road
 Nor at the monastery again abode.

Now it befell next year, with Allah's aid,
 The pilgrimage to Mecca that I made
 And there, in honour of the Omnipotent
 As compassing the Holy House I went,
 Abdulmesih the prior I espied
 And five of his companions him beside,
 All on the circuit of the Kaabeh bent.
 Which when I saw, on me astoniment
 There fell; then after him in haste I hied
 And overtaking him, was certified
 That he himself it was in life and limb,
 And not his wraith; wherefore, accosting him,
 "Sir," said I, "art thou not (God's name on it!)
 "Abdulmesih er Ráhib (monk, to wit,)"
 And he, "Not so: Abdallah is my name,
 Er Rághib hight." (Which, being on the same
 Fashion interpreted, God's servant means,
 Desireful dubbed, a name to Nazarenes
 Assigned, who turn to Islam of God's grace.)
 This when I heard, the tears o'erran my face,
 And for sheer joy and bliss unspeakable,
 Awhile a word I could not speak, but fell
 His hoary locks to kissing, all unmanned
 For very ravishment. Then, by the hand
 Taking, I carried him apart with me
 Into a corner of the Sanctuary
 And in His name who sunders night from day,
 Conjured him of the reason and the way

Of his and his companions' having been
 Turned from the error of the Nazarene
 To Islam and the road of righteousness
 Our ignorance and yearning to possess.
 Whereunto he, in answer, "Sir, the cause
 Of our conversion," said, "a wonder was,
 Forsooth, of wonders inenarrable;
 And on this wise it was that it befell.
 No great while after you our humble cell
 Did with your too brief presence, of your grace,
 Honour and ornament, unto the place,
 Whereas our monastery is situate,
 It chanced there came, by the decree of Fate
 And Fortune foreordained, a company
 Of Muslim devotees, unknowing we
 Whence did they come and whither they were boun,
 Who entered not therein, but, lighting down
 Without the walls, a youth, of those that went
 Wandering with them, into the village sent,
 To buy them victual. Faring, with that aim,
 About the place, it chanced that, as he came
 Into the market, lifting up his head,
 He spied a damsel sitting selling bread,
 A Nazarene who was and passing fair,
 With sea-blue eyes and gracious golden hair.
 No sooner did his gaze upon her light
 Than stricken dumb he was with her sweet sight
 And of her lovesome looks, as by some spell
 O'erta'en, incontinent so sore he fell
 Enamoured that, his patience and his sense
 Forsaking him, aswoon, at unprepense,
 He fell upon his face and so he lay.
 Then, coming to himself, he took his way
 Back to his comrades with the provender

And bade them "Fare you well! I tarry here.
 Go ye about your business; weal or woe,
 Betide what will, I may not with you go."
 Thereat amazement took them and they chid
 And questioned him. But still the cause he hid
 Of his resolve; so they, to them no heed
 Finding he gave and having done their need,
 Left him to his devices and fared on:
 Whilst he, poor star-struck fool, returned anon
 Into the town and at the damsel's door
 Sat down. She, seeing him a-sit before
 Her place and knowing him no villager,
 Came forth and asked him what he would with her.
 He, having nothing but her in his thought,
 Full simply answered her that all distraught
 For love of her he was and like to die;
 Whereat she turned from him without reply,
 As haply angered at his simpleness.
 But he, nowhit rebuffed, nor more nor less
 Abiding, like a statue, three days' space,
 With his eyes fixed upon the damsel's face,
 There in the open door, before her shop,
 Sat on, without food tasted, bit or drop.
 Then, when she saw that, 'spite of everywhat
 She did, the youth from her departed not,
 She sought her kinsfolk dwelling in the place
 And taking counsel with them of the case,
 They loose on him the village urchins let,
 Who straight with sticks and stones did him beset
 And stoned him from afar and broke his head
 And bruised his ribs; but still, as he were dead,
 He sat nor budged for aught that they might do.
 Wherefore the people of the place anew
 Counsel together took to kill the wight:

But one of them there came to me by night
 And advertised me of the thing in thought
 Which was to do and how to slay they sought
 The stranger youth. So I went forth and found.
 The hapless Muslim prostrate on the ground,
 Bescored with bleeding wounds and stiff with mud
 And gore. Then from his face I wiped the blood
 And carried him into the monastery,
 Whereas I dressed his wounds, and he with me
 Some fourteen days abode. But hardly had
 He gotten strength to walk, poor silly lad,
 Than he the convent left and to her door
 Returning, on the damsel as before
 Sat gazing, unadread. Which when she saw,
 Forth unto him she came and "By God's Law,
 Thou movest me to pity!" said. "If thou
 My faith wilt enter, by the Cross I vow,
 I will e'en marry thee." "If this I did,
 'Twere ill with me," he answered. "Heaven forbid
 That I should leave the faith of Unity
 Of God and enter that whose Gods are three!"
 "Then come with me into my house," she said,
 "And take thy will of me, that am a maid,
 And go thy ways in peace." But he, "Not so.
 How shall I for a moment's lust forego
 And barter for a fleeting bliss the tears,
 The prayers, the pious service of twelve years?"
 "Then," answered she, "forthright from me depart."
 But he, "Ah wellaway! fair maid, my heart
 Will nowise suffer me do that," did say.
 Wherefore she turned her face from him away;
 And presently the boys of the young man
 Became aware and gathering, began
 A-pelting him with stones again, till he

Upon his face fell, saying, "Verily,
 God is my keeper, He who down the Book
 Sent and the righteous never yet forsook!"
 Things being at this pass, I sallied forth
 And driving off the rabble, from the earth
 Lifted the Muslim's head and heard him say,
 "O God, unite Thou me with her, I pray,
 In Paradise!" Then in my arms, to bear
 Unto the convent, him I took: but, ere
 The shelter I might reach, he died; and I,
 Without the village boundaries, hard by,
 Digging a grave, before the day grew dim,
 There with my own hands sadly buried him.

That night, when all else in the village slept,
 Those on the walls and in the ways that kept
 The accustomed watch and ward, the damsel heard
 Give a great cry (and she abed) that stirred
 The sleeping folk and roused them from their rest.
 So they rose up, with slumber yet opprest,
 And flocking all together to the maid,
 Questioned her of her case; whereto she said,
 "But now, what while I slept without affray,
 The Muslim came to me, who died to-day,
 And took me by the hand and carried me
 Unto the gates of Paradise. But he,
 Who kept the ward thereof, me withinside
 Would nowise suffer, saying, "Tis denied
 To unbelievers in God's promised land
 To enter." Wherefore, at the young man's hand,
 Islam I straight embraced and entering
 Therein with him, saw gardens blossoming,
 With rivers under them, and flowering trees,
 Yea, and pavillions eke and palaces
 Such that description faileth me withal

To image one least jot to you of all
 That therewithin I looked upon. Anon
 He brought me unto a pavilion
 With pearls and gems high-builed, saying, "Mine
 Foreordered this pavilion is and thine;
 Nor will I enter it except with thee.
 But, after five days' space, thou shalt with me,
 So God Most High do of His will deem fit,
 Together of a surety be in it."
 Then to an apple-tree,—that at the door
 Of that pavilion, with its golden store
 Of fruit the air enbalsaming, did stand,
 High-laden, glorious,—putting forth his hand,
 He plucked two apples, shining as the sun,
 And to me gave them, bidding me eat one
 And keep the other, that the monks might view
 The thing with their own eyes and know it true.
 So one of the two apples did I eat
 And never than its savour aught more sweet
 I tasted. By the hand, then, taking me
 Yet once again, he brought me presently
 Back to my house, whereas on sleep again
 I fell; and when awhile therein I'd lain,
 Awakening, I started up in haste
 And in my mouth the eaten apple's taste
 And in my hand the other holden found."
 So saying, she her girdle-cloth unwound
 And brought the apple forth unto their sight,
 Which in the mirk and dead of middle night,
 When all things else to vision hidden are,
 Shone in the darkness like a sparkling star.
 Therewith they brought her to the monastery,
 Whereas her vision unto us did she
 Anew recount and did the apple show;

Nor, of all fruits that in the world do grow,
 E'er on the like and fellow did we look
 Of that same apple. Then a knife I took
 And in as many pieces even as we
 The apple cut were folk in company;
 And never more delicious knew we aught
 Nor sweeter than its taste. But in our thought
 We said, "This sure some demon was, some wraith
 Of hell, that, to seduce her from her faith,
 Appeared to her, when, in the dead of night,
 Men's wit is weak for lack of wholesome light."
 Then her folk took her and with her away
 Departed; but the damsel from that day
 From meat and drink abstained, till the fifth night,
 When from her bed she rose by the moon's light
 And going forth the village to the place
 Where the young Muslim buried was, her face
 She pillowed on the grave and by his side,
 Who died for love of her, lay down and died.

Her people knew not what was come of her;
 But, on the morrow, with the day's first stir,
 Two Muslim elders to the place there came,
 In haircloth garbed, and with them, on the same
 Stern fashion clad, two women; and they said,
 "O people of the village, with you dead
 A woman of God's friends there lieth, who
 A Muslim died, and we, instead of you,
 To take the charge of her are hither sent."
 Wherefore her people seeking for her went,
 Till on the Muslim's grave they found her laid,
 And "This our sister of our faith," they said,
 "Was and assuredly therein she died,
 And we will bury her." "Not so," replied
 The two old men; "in that of unity

Of God she died; and so we claim her, we."
 And the dispute betwixt the parties twain
 Waxed hot till "Idle is the talk and vain,"
 Quoth one of the old Muslims. "This the test
 Be of her faith. If she the Cross confessed,
 As ye do fable of her, let there be
 The monks, all forty, from the monastery
 Fetched hither and to lift her up essay
 From this our sad dead brother's grave. If they
 Avail for doing this, a Nazarene
 It that she died shall by approof be seen.
 If not, then one of us unto the field
 Shall come and lift her up; and if she yield
 To him, it shall appear that in good deed
 She died a Muslim." So the folk agreed
 To this and thither fetched the monks twoscore,
 Who, heartening each other, laboured sore
 To lift her up, but might not make her stir.
 Then a great rope about the midst of her
 We bound and haled upon it with our might.
 But the stout rope in sunder broke outright,
 So that we fell; and stirless still she lay
 Nor would she budge, for aught we might essay.
 Nay, of the villagers came all who would
 And their endeavours joined to ours, but could
 Not any fashion move her from her place.
 Then, when we thus had striven for a space
 And every our device had proved in vain,
 To one of those old Muslim pilgrims twain,
 "Come thou and raise her, if thou canst," we said.
 So to the grave he came and o'er the maid
 His mantle spreading for a covering,
 Said, "In the name of the Compassionate King,
 Of God the Merciful, the only One,

Maker of earth and sea and sky and sun,
 And of His Prophet's faith, the Best of Men,
 On whom be blessing and salvation!" Then
 He lightly lifted her without demur
 And in his bosom taking, so with her
 Betook himself unto a cave hard by,
 Wherein full tenderly he let her lie.
 Thither anon the Muslim women came
 And laid her out and washed her in God's name
 And shrouded her in webs of woollen blue.
 Then the two elders took her up anew
 And bearing her to the young Muslim's tomb,
 Prayed over her and delving her a room,
 Hard by his side, till night and day should cease,
 Laid her to rest and went their ways in peace.

Now we were witness to all this; and when
 Alone again, apart from other men,
 Within the quiet monastery's shade,
 We were and private each with each, we said
 One to another, "Of a verity,
 The truth most worthy followed is to be;
 And publicly indeed made manifest
 It hath unto us been; nor any test
 More clear nor plainer proof of Islam's truth,
 Than in this matter of the Muslim youth
 And of the Christian damsel hath this day,
 Passing the power of any to gainsay,
 Unto our eyes been rendered visible
 And we have witnessed, were it possible
 To have." So I and all the monks did recognize
 The Faith of Righteousness, and on like wise
 Did all the townsfolk; and incontinent
 To those of Irak Arabi we sent,
 Seeking a doctor of the law, that us

Should in the ordinances glorious
Of Islam and the canon and the rite
Of prayer endoctrine. Whereupon forthright
A pious man they sent us and a fair,
Who taught us all the ritual of prayer
And all devotion's forms and usances,
With allwhat else that appertaining is
Unto the service of the Heavenly King.
And now in great good case in everything
We are and blessed are our nights and days,
To Allah be the glory and the praise,
To Him who orders all the worldly ways,
Whose hand doth this exalt and that abase,
Turner of Hearts and Changer of the Case,
Who still accomplisheth, in all men's sight,
The common miracle of Day and Night!"



THE BLACKSMITH WHO COULD
HANDLE FIRE WITHOUT HURT.



THE BLACKSMITH WHO COULD HANDLE FIRE WITHOUT HURT.

A CERTAIN pious man whilom heard tell
That there in such and such a town did dwell
A smith who in the middle furnace-flare
Could to the elbow thrust his forearm bare
And forth thereof the redhot iron bring
And handle without hurt. So, journeying,
Unto the place he came and found the man;
And watching him, as he to work began,
He saw him do as it of him was said;
For that, unburned, the iron, being red,
He gripped and handled very coals of fire.
Whereat there overcame him great desire
To know the reason of the wondrous thing;
So, waiting till the smith left hammering
And stood, his day's work done, at easance, he
Accosted him and gave him courteously
To understand that he his guest that night
Would be: whereto, "With all my heart," the wight
Said and it being now the even-gloom,
The stranger took and carried with him home,
Whereas they supped together and to sleep
Lay down. And all night long the guest did keep
Strait watch upon his host, but saw no sign,
Passing the common, of devout design
Or piety especial; and quoth he
Unto himself, "Belike himself from me
Of his humility he doth conceal,

Unto a stranger shame his pious zeal
 Thinking to show and fain himself to hide
 From all save God." Wherefore he did abide
 A second night with him and eke a third,
 But nothing more than common saw or heard;
 Nay, that he did no more than keep, he saw,
 The ordinary letter of the Law
 And rose but little in the night to pray,
 As of their wont who follow in God's way,
 Seeking to gain some special grace Divine.
 Then, at the last, to him, "O brother mine,
 Of the rare gift and great which hath conferred
 Of God upon thee been," quoth he, "I've heard
 And with mine eyes the truth thereof have seen,
 How thou of the Most High hast favoured been,
 In that He fire to handle without hurt
 Hath granted thee, and yet of such desert,
 As in His sight such singular great grace
 Hath gotten thee, can find in thee no trace.
 Moreover, I have noted thee with care
 And marked thine assiduity in prayer
 And exercise devout, but find in thee
 No fervour of especial piety,
 Such as distinguisheth, among the rest
 Of mortals, those in whom made manifest
 Are such miraculous gifts as this of thine.
 Whence, then, I prithee, cometh this, in fine,
 To thee?" And "O my guest," he made reply,
 "Hearken and I will tell thee. Know that I
 Enamoured of a damsel passing fair
 Was aforetime and her with many a prayer
 And amorous solicitation wooed.
 But, howsoever sore to her I sued,
 Requiring her of love, no whit prevail

Might I with her; for she withouten fail
 Clave to her chastity and gave no ear
 To my sollicitance. Then came a year
 Of drougt and dearth; and hardship terrible
 There was. Food failed the folk and there befell
 In all the land a famine passing sore.
 One day at home I sat, when at the door
 One knocked and going out, the cruel fair
 I found, of whom I told thee, standing there;
 And unto me, "O brother mine," she said,
 "Behold, I am for hunger well nigh dead
 And with reared hands myself to thee betake,
 Beseeching thee to feed me for God's sake."
 And "Know'st not how I love thee," I replied,
 "And how I for thy sake have pined and sighed
 And suffered for thy love? Forsooth, no whit
 Of food, except thou, in return for it,
 Do amorously yield thyself to me,
 Thee will I give." But, "Better death," quoth she,
 "Than disobedience;" and turned away
 From me and went; but, on the second day
 Thereafter, with the like petition came
 And I for answer rendered her the same.
 Whereon she entered, faint and scant of breath,
 And sat her down, nigh being unto death.
 Then I before her set a mess of meat;
 Whereat her eyes ran over and "To eat
 Give me for God in heaven's sake," quoth she,
 "To whom pertaineth might and majesty!"
 But "Nay, by Allah!" answered I. "Not so,
 Except thyself to me, before thou go,
 Thou yield; and "Better death," was her reply,
 "Is than the wrath to me of God Most High."
 Withal untouched the food she left and went,

This verse repeating for her heartenment:

*O Thou the Only God, Whose grace embraceth all that be,
Thine ears have heard my moan, Thine eyes have
seen my misery.*

*Indeed, privation and distress are heavy on my head: I
cannot tell of all the woes which do beleaguer me.*

*I am as one athirst, that looks upon a running stream,
Yet may not drink a single draught of all that he
doth see.*

*My flesh will have me buy its will: alack! its pleasures flee:
The sin that pays their price abides to all eternity.*

For two days' space I saw of her no more;
Then she, a third time coming to my door,
Knocked and I sallied out to her. And lo,
Hunger away her voice had taken, so
That first she might not speak; but, presently,
Somedele herself recovering, quoth she,
(And haggard she with hunger was and gaunt,)
"See, o my brother, I am worn with want
And what to do, indeed, I do not know;
For I to none but thee my face can show.
Wilt thou not, then, for love of God Most High,
Feed me?" But still, "Not so," did I reply,
"Excepting ruth thou have on my chagrin
And yield to me." Wherewith she entered in
And there sat down. Now for the nonce no meat
Ready I had and cooked for her to eat;
So I went forth, thereof for her desire
To dress, and in the brazier kindled fire.
But, when the meat was cooked and in its place
Upon the platter laid, behold, the grace
Of God Most High there entered into me
And to myself I said, "Now out on thee!
This woman, weak and frail as women are

Of wit and faith, hath food forborne thus far,
 Rather than do a thing of Holy Writ
 Forbidden unto her, till she from it,
 For stress of hunger, can endure no more:
 Nay, time on time she doth and o'er and o'er
 Refuse and thou persistest yet, forby,
 In disobedience to God Most High!"
 And "O my God, I do repent to thee
 Of that which had been purposed of me,"
 I said; then took the food and to the maid
 Bringing it in, the dish before her laid
 And "Eat and be" I bade her "of good cheer:
 There shall no harm betide thee. Have no fear;
 For this is for the sake of God Supreme,
 Whom only might and majesty beseem."
 This when she hearkened, lifting up her head
 And hands to heaven, "O Thou my God," she said,
 "If this man be sincere in this he saith,
 I pray Thee, of my service and my faith,
 Be fire to do him hurt forbid of Thee,
 Both in this world and in the world to be!
 For Thou indeed art He that answereth prayer
 And able art for doing whatsoe'er
 Thou wilt." Withal I left her and anew
 The fire out in the brazier went to do.
 Now 'twas the season of the winter cold
 And from the brazier, as it chanced, there rolled
 A burning coal and on my body fell:
 But, by the ordinance of God, in Hell
 And Heaven, as on earth, Omnipotent,
 In whom all might and majesty consent,
 Nor pain nor incommodity in aught
 I felt and it was borne upon my thought
 That God her prayer had answered. So I took

The hot coal in my hand (which else to brook
Had been uneath, but now it irked me not)
And going in to her, with it red-hot,
On my palm flaming, said to her, "Rejoice!
For God, behold, hath hearkened to the voice
Of that thy prayer and granted thy desire
To thee of me, forbidding thus the fire
To do me hurt." Withal she from her hand
The morsel dropped and rising up a-stand,
Said, "O my God, Thou that art God, alone
Worthy of worship, now that Thou hast shown
Me my desire of this man and my prayer
Hast granted me for him and there no care
Is left me upon earth, I pray Thee now
Take Thou my soul to Thee forthright; for Thou
Almighty art, Omnipotent!" And He
Straight took her soul, His mercy on her be!"

THE GOLDEN CUP.



THE GOLDEN CUP.

WHO has of Jaafer not, the Barmecide,
Heard and how great and glorious far and wide
He was from Oman to the China Sea?
None other word for generosity
Than "Jaafer" was in Araby and Ind,
No name but Yehya's son for brave and kind.
From Fars to Egypt one his noble name
With virtue and with goodness was and same.
There was none woeful, none opprest of fate,
But found a refuge in his gracious gate:
Asylum of the world, from Nishapour
To Nile, he was and shelter of the poor.
Yet (Alas! "therefore" were the fitter word;
For when was it of virtue ever heard
That long it prospered in this world of woe,
Where worth and wisdom unregarded go
And the mainsprings of life are spite and greed?)
Death was untimely unto him decreed
Of fickle Fate; for hate and envy wrought
So sore against him in the jealous thought
Of the sick tyrant whom he served too well
That, like a thunderbolt, his terrors fell
In ruin from the blue on Jaafer's head
And sudden all save memory was dead
Of that brave gallant soul, all blotted out
From the sheer sunshine and the revel-rout
Of light and air and sense and sight and sound
Was that fair life and huddled underground

Was that bright royal brow, those radiant eyes,
 That looked on men to gladden them, God-wise,
 That heart, which but with love and pity beat,
 Those lips, which nothing spoke but fair and feat,
 Those hands, which grace and goodness only wrought,
 That subtle brain, that all-embracing thought,
 Nought of these all abode but memory;
 And even memory by his decree
 Fain would that trembling tyrant from men's minds
 Have blotted out, lest, borne upon the winds,
 The mere remembrance of what they were,
 These noble Barmecides, the very air
 And breath of that their world-renowned worth,
 Recalled, should yet avail to bring to birth
 Some shadow of their lives of love and light,
 Some phantom of their mild heroic might,
 Which should belike suffice to batter down
 The house of cards of his unstable crown,
 His hate and fear it not sufficing in
 The selfsame roll of death all Jaafer's kin,
 Man, woman, child, young, old, fruit, blossom, bud,
 To have writ down in characters of blood.
 Wherefore he let proclaim abroad and cry,
 In all the ways, to all the passers-by,
 That whoso dared to mourn for Jaafer dead
 Should share his fate with him and lose his head;
 And many an one, whom memory moved and faith
 To sorrow for the Barmecides, to death
 He merciless let put. But all in vain;
 For day and night, the mourning for the slain
 Rose up and cried against him to the sky;
 Yea, louder waxed the clamour and more high,
 Till, frightened from Baghdad, himself and crew
 To Rakka by Euphrates he withdrew.

There, from his closet-lattice looking down,
 One day, unseen, upon the teeming town,
 Beyond the cinctures of the market-place
 A ruined house he marked and in the space
 Before it, on a pillar-foot, which told
 Of where some goodly mansion stood of old,
 An old man mounted saw, with grizzled beard
 Wide-waving in the wind and arms upreared,
 And folk about him gathered in a crowd,
 To whom with speech right vehement and loud,
 As, though the distance dumb'd it, manifest
 Was by his gestures, he himself addressed,
 And all the folk to passion moved, 'twas plain,
 (Although, for farness, he his ears in vain
 Enforced to catch the substance of his speech,)
 And pity with some sorrowful impeach.
 The Khalif, curious to know the cause
 Of that which toward in the ruin was,
 One of his officers despatched thereto,
 Bidding him seek out that which was to do
 And eke the greybeard to his presence bring.
 The messenger, enquiring of the thing,
 Came in a little back with the old man
 Bound and "O scion of the Prophet's clan,"
 Said, "yonder ruined house of those is one
 Which heretofore pertained to Yehya's son,
 Jaafer ben Bermek, and this elder here,
 Mundir es Sádíc highten, without fear
 Of God or reverence for thy decree,
 Which biddeth all leave grieving presently,
 On pain of death, for Jaafer and his race,
 Still at this hour each day takes up his place
 Yonder, where Jaafer's mansion was whilere,
 And to the general ear doth there declare

The graces and the greatness of the dead,
 With many a groan and sigh and much tears shed,
 Dead Jaafer's deeds and virtues telling o'er
 And heartening the people, with great store
 Of instances, to mourn for him full sore
 And cry to God against his slayer, thee."

Thereat the horseshoe vein (the Háshimi
 Hight, for to Háshim, father of the race,
 Mohammed's grandsire, the grim feature trace
 The sons of Abbas, so the people tell,)
 Sudden between the Khalif's brows did swell,
 In sign and token sure of wrath to be,
 And anger overcame him like a sea.
 Wherefore he presently commanded bear
 Old Mundir to the ruin back and there
 Him straightway crucify in all men's sight,
 For warning to the folk. But that strange wight,
 Claiming the boon, which no man may deny,
 Of speech allowed, to those about to die,
 A tale so pitiful, so sweet, so sad,
 Of misery redeemed and grief made glad,
 Of ruin told retrieved and dead distress
 Brought back to life, of hope and happiness
 By the fair force of faith and sympathy,
 Of loving kindness and nobility,
 New-made, of a soul's winter unto spring
 By one man's hand returned, depicting
 Dead Jaafer's goodness with so shrewd a touch
 Of longing lovefulness, with passion such
 And wistful memory, that none dry-eyed,
 For the remembrance of the Barmecide,
 In all that company there might abide.
 Nay, as of God Most High it was decreed,
 Even on the stony soul of Er Reshíd

His sad true speech took hold, with love's mild heat
 Melting the ice of hate and self-conceit,
 And did its hardness on such sort surprise
 That the tears welled in his unwonted eyes,
 The old man's story all the love and truth
 Of that brave gallant comrade of his youth,
 That loyal counsel of his riper years,
 That faithful sharer of his hopes and fears,
 Recalling to his unaccustomed thought:
 Yea, on such wise it stirred in him and wrought
 Upon his hardened heart and brain that he
 Withal to Mundir life and liberty
 Not only did vouchsafe, but, catching up
 A great gold jewel-studded drinking-cup,
 That on the credence-table stood thereby,
 And it with bright broad pieces brimming high,
 Into his hands bestowed it, saying, "These
 Have thou of me for thy necessities,"
 And paused, as thanks expecting for the gift.
 Yet Mundir, as to heaven he did uplift
 The costly boon, no word of gratitude
 Vouchsafed the monarch for the gifted good,
 But cried, with eyes tear-streaming, "Even this,
 This, also, of thy bounties, Jaafer, is!"



BY THE TOKEN OF THE BEAN.



BY THE TOKEN OF THE BEAN.

HAROUN el Abbasi, hight Er Reshíd,
(Which is to say the Orthodox,) decreed,
Whenas he Jaafer slew, the Barmecide,
That whoso mourned him should be crucified;
Wherefore the folk, affrighted, at the least
From open tears and public mourning ceased;
But in their hearts they sorrowed none the less
For the great house of Bermek, and the stress
Of their resentment, waxing day by day,
Drove from Baghdad Haroun at last away.

Now in a far-off desert there abode
A Bedouin, who every year an ode
In Jaafer's honour made and therewithal
Came to the mighty Vizier's presence-hall
And to reward of Jaafer having had
A thousand dinars of largesse, full glad,
Unto his desert gat him back again
And there with all his family was fain
To live in plenty till the coming year.
So, when the end of the twelfth month was near,
The man his desert, with the wonted rhyme,
Departed and at the accustomed time
Came to Baghdad and finding Jaafer dead,
Betook himself to where, without a head,
His body hung upon the gallows-tree,
And there, his camel causing bend the knee
And lighting thence the gibbet down before,
Wept grievously and sorrowed passing sore.

Then, in the honour of his patron dead,
 His ode he did rehearse and with his head
 Upon the bare earth pillowed, there down lay,
 Thinking to watch. But, with the travelled way
 And grief forwearied inexpressible,
 At unawares and fast on sleep he fell.
 And as he slept and nothing saw or heard,
 Jaafer the Barmecide to him appeared,
 As in a dream it had been, and "Behold,
 Thyself thou hast forwearied, as of old,
 To come to us and honour us," said he,
 "And findest us, alack! as thou dost see.
 But, when thou wakest, to Bassora go
 And there for such an one, hight so and so,
 Among the merchants of the place enquire
 And having sought him out, of my desire
 Possess him, saying unto him from me,
 Jaafer the Barmecide saluteth thee
 And bids thee, by the token of the bean,
 Since he himself is dead and beggared clean,
 A thousand dinars give of thine avail
 Unto this Bedouin and do not fail!"
 Then with his hand to him, as who should say,
 "Farewell!" he signed and melted clean away.

The Bedouin, awaking, of his dream
 Remembered him and on the Tigris stream
 Forthright embarking, to Bassora fared
 And there, the merchant found, to him repaired
 And him of Jaafer's words and will possessed.
 Which when he heard, he wept, as if his breast
 The soul for sorrow should depart; then he,
 The stranger bringing to his house, days three
 Him for an honoured guest did entertain,
 And him, unto departure being fain,

A thousand dinars gave and having laid
 Thereto five hundred other, "These," he said,
 Are that which is commanded unto thee
 And the five hundred are a gift from me;
 And still, as thou from Jaafer hadst of old
 Each year a thousand dinars of good gold,
 So, whilst I live, imbursement of the same
 Thou shalt of me receive, in Jaafer's name."
 The Bedouin for all his gifts and grace
 Rendered him thanks; then, ere he set his face
 His desert-ward, conjured him by God's sheen
 The history to tell him of the bean,
 So he might know the manner of the thing.
 "With all my heart," the merchant, answering,
 Began and told him what is here set down.

"Know that of days bygone in Baghdad town
 I dwelt and being miserably poor,
 By hawking hot boiled beans from door to door,
 Was fain to earn my dole of daily bread.
 Now, one cold rainy day, when overhead
 Was nought but clouds and all the streets about
 Were mud and mire-water, I sallied out;
 And as I went, with cold and hunger pined,
 And shivered in the freezing rain and wind,
 For I upon my body clothes enough
 Had not to fend me from the weather rough,
 Now stumbling in the pools of fallen rain,
 Now splashing through the mire and out again,
 And altogether in such piteous plight,
 As whoso saw must shudder at the sight,
 It chanced that Jaafer, from an upper room,
 Where, with his officers and cupmates, whom
 He most affected, he that day did sit,
 Looked forth; and as his eyes upon me lit,

He took compassion on my sorry case
 And sending out a servant, of his grace,
 To bring me in to him, he bade me sell
 My beans to those his people. So I fell
 My merchandise to meting presently
 Out with a measure which I had with me;
 And each who took a measureful did fill
 The empty vessel with gold pieces, till
 The basket empty was of all I had.
 Then, as to gather up the money, glad
 In that which I had gotten, I bethought
 Myself and go, quoth Jaafer, "Hast thou aught
 Of beans yet left?" "I know not," I replied
 And in the basket sought on every side,
 But found, however straitly I might look,
 One only bean remained. This Jaafer took
 And splitting with his finger-nail in twain,
 Did for himself one half thereof retain
 And to his favourite, who sat therenigh,
 The other gave, "For how much wilt thou buy,"
 Saying, "this half-a-bean?" And "For the tale
 Of all this coin twice-told it shall avail,"
 Quoth she. Whereat to wondering I fell
 And in myself, "This is impossible,"
 Said; but, as I, confounded, there did stand,
 She unto one her handmaid gave command,
 Who brought me presently the whole in gold.
 "And I," said Jaafer, "for the tale twice-told
 Of this and that my half thereof I e'en
 Will buy." Then, "Take the price of this thy bean,"
 He said to me. Therewith, at his behest,
 One of his servants, adding to the rest
 The sum thereof twice measured, as he bade,
 The heaped-up monies in my basket laid;

And I, o'ermuch amazed by word or look
To show my gratitude, the basket took
And back withal unto my lodging fared.
Thereafter to Bassora I repaired,
Where with the bounty of the Barmecide
Myself to trade and commerce I applied;
And God the Lord Most High hath prospered me,
To Him the praise, to Him the glory be!
So, if a thousand dinars I a year
Of Jaafer's bounties give thee, never fear
'Twill straiten neither irk me anywhat."
And he who tells the tale (I mind me not
His name) for ending adds, "Consider now
The nobleness of Jaafer's soul and how
Extolled and glorified, alive and dead,
He was, God's mercies be upon his head!"



THE TWO CAKES OF BREAD.



THE TWO CAKES OF BREAD.

A CERTAIN king once proclamation made
Unto the people of his realm and said,
"Know that 'gainst almsgiving I've set my thought;
Wherefore his hands, who giveth alms of aught,
Will I cut off." Whereat from almsgiving
The folk forbore, for terror of the king,
And none might give an alms of anything.
One day unto a certain woman came
A beggar and besought her in God's name
Give him to eat; and "How shall I," quoth she,
"Give thee to eat, seeing the king's decree
Is that who giveth alms of aught shall feel
Upon his either hand the hangman's steel?"
But he forbore her not and round her feet
Clinging, conjured her, "Give thou me to eat
By God most High, who all things ordereth!
For I am hungered even unto death."
And she, when thus she heard him her conjure,
Against his prayer no longer might endure,
But, "What God willeth be with me!" she said
And gave him of her store two cakes of bread.
When to the king this her transgression known
Became, he summoned her before his throne
And for her trespass against his commands
Reproaching her, let strike off both her hands
And sent her back, thus maimed, unto her place,
Where she was like to starve, except God's grace,
The people's hearts toward her softening,
Had boldened them to disobey the king,
So that they pity on her plight did take
And fed and tended her for heaven's sake.
Then the case came to the king's mother's ear,
Who brought her to the palace in to her
And unto her rich gifts and raiment gave;

Yea, for herself she took her to her slave
 And taught her with her feet to serve and spin.
 And for that she was chaste and clean from sin,
 God lent her lovesomeness and made her fair
 Of face and sweet of speech and debonair,
 Beyond all other women, of demean.

Now the king minded was to take a queen
 And to his dam discovering his thought,
 Some damsel fair to find him her besought
 Enough and good and gracious for his bed,
 Whom he unto his lawful wife might wed
 And set her by his side upon the throne.
 Quoth she, "No need to look beyond our own.
 Here, in a palace of thy palaces,
 Among the women in my service is
 A maiden more of price than gems and gold,
 Fairest of all fair women to behold:
 But one default she hath and passing sore,
 In that her two fair hands have heretofore
 Been cruelly hewn off." Whereunto he,
 "Nay, bring her forth to me and let me see."
 So out to him she brought her and the maid
 Sweet-faced and shining as the moon displayed.
 And he of her forthright enamoured fell
 And took her to his wife and loved her well
 And lay with her; and ere a year was done,
 The maid conceived by him and bore a son.

Now this was she whose hands cut off had been
 For almsgiving; and when to be his queen
 The king of all the land did her prefer,
 The women of the palace envied her;
 And when thereafterward a son she bore,
 Their jealousy went waxing more and more,
 Till at the last they counsel each with each

To work her ruin took; and to impeach
 Her to her husband of adultery
 They presently together did agree.
 Wherefore, with lying letters to the king,
 Who for the nonce was absent, warring
 Against his foes in a far distant land,
 They gave him guilefully to understand
 That she, whom he had wived and made his queen,
 Was of her body blemished and unclean
 And that the child which she had borne was none
 Of his begetting, but another's son.
 He, credit to their false advertisement
 Vouchsafing, letters to his mother sent,
 Into the desert that his wife unchaste
 Bidding her bear and leave her in the waste,
 To die of hunger. The old queen obeyed
 Her son's behest and carried, as he said,
 The damsel to a desert far away,
 Where never any came by night or day,
 And having bound the child about her neck,
 There left the twain to perish without reck.

The damsel fell to weeping bitterly
 For that which had befallen her; then she
 (For she was parched with thirst) went wandering
 Hither and thither, seeking for some spring
 Where she might drink, and coming presently
 Unto a running river, on her knee
 (The child upon her bosom hanging still)
 Knelt down thereby, to drink thereof her fill,
 Well nigh forspended being with excess
 Of thirst, for sorrowing and weariness.
 But, as she stooped and bent her head to drink,
 The child into the water at the brink
 Fell from her neck and nought might she avail

To save it, for the hands to her did fail.
 Then sat she weeping sore for that her child,
 And as she wept, alone in that vast wild,
 There came two men to her and saw her sad
 And asked her why she wept. Quoth she, "I had
 But now a child about my neck and he
 Is fallen in the water, woe is me!"
 Then said they, "Wilt thou that we bring him out
 To thee?" And "Yea," she answered; "without doubt."
 So unto God Most High they prayed and lo!
 The child came forth the river even so
 And safe and sound was unto her restored.
 Then to her said they, "Wilt thou that the Lord
 Give thee thy hands again, as erst they were?"
 "Surely," quoth she; whereat they offered prayer
 To God, extolled and hallowed be His name!
 And she her hands again, yet not the same,
 Received, but goodlier than they were by far.
 Then said the two men, "Know'st thou who we are?"
 "Nay, God alone all-knowing is," she said;
 And "We," quoth they, "are thy two cakes of bread,
 Which on the beggar thou bestow'dst whilere
 And of the cutting-off thy hands which were
 Th' occasion. Wherefore unto God Most High
 Praise do thou render, for that, at thy cry,
 Thy child and eke thy hands He hath restored."
 So praise and thanks she rendered to the Lord
 And glorified His might and majesty.
 And eke, thereafterward, by His decree,
 The king her husband, to his realm when he
 Returned and came to know her innocence,
 Her enemies and enviers banished thence
 And seeking out his exiled wife, was fain
 To take her to his bosom back again.

THE HERMIT'S HERITAGE.



THE HERMIT'S HERITAGE.

ONE of God's friends aforetime I besought,
To tell me what it was with him that wrought
To leave the world and turned his heart and soul
Unto the service of the One, the Whole.
"With all my heart," he said and thus began :
"Erst on the Nile I was a ferryman
And there for hire, to earn my living, plied
Betwixt the Eastern and the Western side.
One day, upon the hither bank await,
After my wont, for custom, as I sate,
I, chancing on one side to turn my glance,
An old man saw of a bright countenance,
In a patched gown attired and in his hand
A gourd-bottle and staff, before me stand,
Who with "Peace be on thee!" saluted me
And I his greeting rendered him. Then he,
"Wilt thou for God's sake give me," said, "to eat
And after ferry me, before the heat
Wax greater, over to the thither side?"
And I, "With all my heart I will," replied.
So he sat down with me and drank and ate,
And after, entering my boat, there sate,
Whilst to the other bank I rowed him o'er.
But, ere he rose from me to go ashore,
He said to me, "I have a trust, on thee
Which I would lay." Quoth I, "Say on," and he,
"Know that the hermit such an one am I
And it hath been of God the Lord Most High

Revealed to me that now my end is nigh
 And that to-morrow morning I shall die.
 Wherefore to-morrow, after noon, to me
 Do thou come over and beneath yon tree
 Thou of a surety shalt find me dead.
 Wash me and in the shroud, beneath my head
 Which thou shalt find, enfold me; then, at hand,
 Dig me a grave hard by and in the sand
 Bury me, having first prayed over me.
 But take my bottle, staff and gown to thee
 And presently deliver them to one
 Who shall come to thee, with the next day's sun,
 And shall of thee require them and receive."
 This having said, he took of me his leave
 And going, left me wondered at his word.

That day no more of him I saw nor heard
 And on the morrow, by I know not what
 Diverted from remembrance, I forgot
 What he had said, until the time drew nigh
 The hour of afternoontide prayer, when I,
 Remembering me, to the appointed place
 Hastened and found him dead with shining face
 Under a palmtree, and beneath his head
 A new shroud folded, that a fragrance shed
 Of musk. I washed and shrouded him and prayed
 O'er him, then dug a grave for him and laid
 His body there and covered it with sand;
 Then, his gourd-bottle, staff and gown in hand
 Taking, back to the Western side I rowed
 And there, as of my wont, the night abode.

Next day, as soon as with the risen sun
 The city-gate was opened, there came one
 To me, a young man, whom I knew by ear
 For a lewd fellow and a chamberer,

Clad all in gold-wrought silk, hands henna-dyed,
 Aloes and ambergris on every side
 Breathing, and said, "Art thou not so and so,
 The ferryman?" "Ay am I," quoth I, "trow."
 "Then," said he, "give me that which thou for me
 In trust hast." "What is that?" asked I; and he,
 "The gown, the bottle and the staff, to wit."
 And I, "Who told thee," said, "of them and it?"
 Quoth he, "A friend of mine yest'reven made
 A marriage-banquet and thereunto bade
 His fellows and among his fellows, me.
 So I and all the merry company
 Did eat with him the marriage-meats and spent
 The night in wantoning and revelment
 And carolling and mirth till hard on day,
 When down, to sleep and take my rest, I lay.
 And as I slept, behold, beside me one
 With countenance resplendent as the sun
 There stood and said unto me, "Know, my son,
 That God Most High hath taken such an one
 The hermit to Himself, of His great grace,
 And hath appointed thee to fill his place.
 Wherefore do thou forthright to so and so
 The ferryman, when thou awakest, go
 And at his hands the dead man's gear receive,
 Gourd, gown and staff, which he with him did leave
 For thee." "Whereat to him I brought them out
 And he, his raiment doffing, the patched clout
 Did on and bade me sell his silken wede
 And widows with the price and orphans feed.
 Then, taking leave of me, the staff and gourd
 He took and went without another word.
 And I for wonder and for pity fell
 A-weeping; but, that night, as I slept well,

The Lord of Glory (hallowéd be He
 And blesséd!) in a dream appeared to me
 And "O My servant, is it grievous," said,
 "To thee that I have granted, as he prayed,
 One of My servants to return to Me?
 Nay, this is of My bounties, verily,
 That I to whom vouchsafe and when I will,
 Who all things at My pleasure can fulfil."
 And I, withal, from sleep awakening,
 Did make and say the verses following;

*The lover with the Loved of will bereft is quite: All
 choice to thee's forbid, if but thou know aright.
 Whether to thee He grant favour and grace or hold Aloof
 from thee, no wise may blame upon Him light.
 His very rigours, nay, except thou glory in, Away! thou
 hast no call to stand with the contrite.
 Know'st not His presence from His absence? Then art thou
 In rear and that thou seek'st in front and out of sight.
 If I be haled away to slaughter for Thy sake Or, yearning,
 yield Thee up the last spark of my spright,
 'Tis in Thy hand. Hold off, grant or deny; 'tis one: At
 that which Thou ordain'st 'tis vain to rail or flite.
 No aim in this my love I have but Thine approof: So,
 if aloof Thou will to hold, 'tis good and right.*

THE MAD LOVER.



THE MAD LOVER.

(QUOTH Aboulabbas the grammarian,
In all Chaldea is no wiser man,)
I once did journey with a company
To El Beríd in Mesopotamie,
And by the Convent of Heraclius
We lighted down midway, to hearten us
And in the shadow of the walls to shun
Somedele the midday fierceness of the sun.
And presently there came us out unto
A servant of the monastery, who
With us full instant was to enter there,
For that therein in keeping madmen were,
He said, "and of them one who speaketh store
Of wisdom, such as ye will wonder sore
To hear." So we arose and entering,
Came, after seeing this and th' other thing,
Unto a cell where one apart from all
Sat with bare head and gazed upon the wall
Nor turned, to see who entered in, his eyes.
We gave him greeting, true-believer-wise,
And he our salutation rendered us
Again, but was nowise solicitous
To cast an eye on us, nor turned his head
To view us. Whereupon the servant said,
"Prithee, some verses unto him say ye;
For, when he heareth verse, then speaketh he."
So I what best to mind recall I might,
In praise of God's Apostle, did recite;

And he toward us, hearing what I said,
 Turning his face, with these his answer made:
*God indeed knoweth I am sore afflicted: I suffer so, I may
 not tell the whole.*

*Two souls I have: one in this place is dwelling: Another
 country holds my second soul.*

*Meseems the absent one is like the present And suffers
 under the same weight of dole.*

Then unto us, "Have I said well or not?"

Turning, he questioned us; and I, "God wot,
 Thou hast said well and passing well," replied.

Then he put out his hand and from his side
 Took up a stone; whereat we fled from him,
 Ourselves misdoubting of his antick whim,
 Lest it belike at us he should have cast.

But therewithal to beating hard and fast
 Upon his breast he fell and "Fear ye not,"

Said; "but draw nigh and hear from me somewhat
 I have it now in mind to say to you:

Receive it ye from me." Wherefore we drew

Again anigh him, putting off affright,

And he the ensuing verses did recite:

*When they made their beasts of burden kneel, as day grew
 nigh and nigher, Then they mounted and the camels
 bore away my heart's desire.*

*When mine eyes perceived my loved one through the
 crannied prison-wall, Then I cried, with streaming
 eyelids and a heart for love afire,*

*"Turn, thou leader of the camels: let me bid my love fare-
 well!" For her absence and estrangement, life and hope
 in me expire.*

*Still I kept my troth and failed not from her love. Ah,
 would I knew What she did with that our trothplight,
 if she kept her faith entire!*

Then, "Know'st thou what she did?" To me he said;
 And I, "Ay do I," answered; "she is dead."
 Whereat I saw his face change, hearing me,
 And to his feet he sprang and "Out on thee!"
 He cried. "'Fore heaven, say, how knowest thou
 That she is dead?" And I, "If she yet now
 Did live, she had not left thee in this place
 To pine for lack of her." "By God, the case
 That changeth, thou art right," he answered, "sir;
 And I care not to live on after her."
 Therewith his body shook and on his face
 He fell and stirred not. Then unto the place
 We ran and raised him softly from the ground
 And shook and called him, but in vain, and found
 Him dead. So over him with tears mourned we
 And buried him in peace. Then, presently
 Leaving the convent, unto El Bérid
 I journeyed on and having done my need,
 Back in due season to Baghdad did fare
 And going in unto the Khalif there,
 El Mutawekkil, he by chance the trace
 Of late-shed tears espied upon my face
 And questioned me of what the cause might be.
 So unto him the piteous history
 Of the poor madman all I did relate;
 Whereat he sorrowed, for his piteous fate
 To him was grievous. Then to me, "What whim
 Moved thee to deal thus cruelly with him?
 By Allah, did I think that of intent
 Thou hadst done this," he said, "I punishment
 Would lay on thee!" And sent his court away
 And mourned for the mad lover all that day.

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Payne, John
Hamid the luckless

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